

THE COLLEGE FOR ALL ACT

Tuition and Debt-Free College for Working Families

Senator Bernie Sanders

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Higher Education Act of 1965 to ensure every American, no matter their background or income, has the opportunity to attend college if they choose. Now, 60 years later, President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans are attempting to strip away opportunity for students to get a quality and affordable college education through cutting programs like Pell Grants and Public Service Loan Forgiveness, eliminating affordable student loan repayment plans, and gutting protections for borrowers defrauded by their colleges.

Rather than undermining college affordability to pay for \$1.1 trillion in tax breaks to the top 1 percent, we must address the real needs of everyday Americans by moving to make college more affordable. Cost should never be a factor when considering whether to pursue higher education, and in the wealthiest nation on earth, we can absolutely afford to invest in our students and our workforce to provide equal opportunity for all. President Johnson said, "Higher education is no longer a luxury, but a necessity," and we must fulfill that vision by making public colleges and universities tuition free and debt free for working families.

The *College for All Act* represents the most substantial expansion of higher education access since the Great Society and opens up the dream of a college degree to millions of children from working families across the United States by making public colleges and universities tuition-free. It would move society from being one in which a college education is for those who can afford it, to higher education as a public good, for those who seek it. Additionally, it would allow students in single households earning up to \$150,000 and married households earning up to \$300,000 a year to attend college without fear of being saddled with student loan debt.

The College for All Act would also ensure that the vast majority of students who enroll at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) can attend tuition-and fee-free.

Making public colleges and universities tuition free is not a radical idea. Other wealthy countries like France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland have made their public colleges and universities tuition free or virtually tuition free several years ago. Over 50 years ago, many of our most prestigious public colleges and universities were also tuition free or virtually tuition free. In a competitive global economy, we need the best educated workforce in the world. Young people should not have to go deeply into debt to get the education they and our nation need. We must make public colleges and universities tuition free.

The College for All Act would generate hundreds of billions of dollars for the economy. And most of all it would provide a clear path into economic security and the American middle class.

Eliminates tuition and fees at public four-year colleges and universities for working families and makes community college tuition-and fee free for all

- Provides tuition-free public community college and public trade school for all students and ensures students in single households earning \$150,000 or less and married households earning \$300,000 or less can attend public four-year colleges and universities tuition-free.
- Creates federal-state partnership grants to States that agree to eliminate tuition and fees at public colleges for working families. The federal government covers a share of the cost of eliminating tuition and fees at public community colleges for all students and at public four-year colleges and universities for students in single households earning up to \$150,000 and married households earning up to \$300,000 per year.
- In the first year, the federal government provides 100 percent of the national average tuition and fees of community college and four- year public college tuition to States for each eligible student. Over a five-year period, the federal share slightly decreases as the State share increases to no more than 20 percent.
- Requires States to align K-12 and postsecondary education in ways that make it easier for students to successfully enroll in public institutions of higher education in the State and transfer from community colleges to public four-year colleges.
- Provides grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to eliminate all tuition and fees for eligible students.
- Allows students to use need-based aid, like Pell Grants, to cover non-tuition related expenses such as living expenses, child care, and transportation.

Doubles Maximum Pell Award to nearly \$15K and allows students to use Pell Grants to cover living expenses to help ensure students graduate debt-free

- Doubles the maximum Pell Grant award: \$7,395 to \$14,790 for the 2026-2027 school year for students enrolled at public and private non-profit colleges
- Dramatically improves the purchasing power of the Pell Grant by allowing students to use Pell toward non-tuition related expenses like living costs. The legislation also improves the Pell Grant by making it a mandatory program and expanding eligibility to Dreamer students. *The College for All Act* would also tie Pell Grants to annual inflation adjustments, increase the lifetime eligibility from 6 years to 7.5 years and make Pell exempt from being taxed as income.

Provides \$10 Billion for Inclusive Student Success Grants to Participating States

- Establishes a \$10 billion grant program for States participating in the federal-state partnership to scale evidence-based practices and strategies to improve student outcomes and address equity gaps at under-funded public colleges and universities, and private, non-profit Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs).

- Requires States to use the grant to invest in evidence-based practices and reforms such as providing academic advisors, mental health counselors, and tutors, and accelerated learning programs.

Triples Federal TRIO Funding

- Triples Federal TRIO funding from \$1.191 billion in FY25 to \$3 billion in FY26 to serve additional students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and first-generation college students in their pursuit of a higher education.

Doubles Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEARUP) Funding

- Doubles GEAR UP funding from \$388 million in FY25 to \$736 million in FY26 to allow additional students from low-income backgrounds to participate in the program.